



OVERSTONE COMBINED SCHOOL

GOVERNORS' NEWSLETTER May 2017

Welcome to the regular newsletter produced by the Governors at Overstone. This is designed to provide parents and carers with information about our work and current priorities.

New Headteacher

Appointing a Headteacher is the responsibility of a school's Governing Body and making that appointment is one of the most significant decisions Governors will take. Our focus in the previous half-term was therefore on the recruitment and selection of Overstone's new Headteacher. We are delighted that Mr Kevin Bowskill will be taking up this role in September, joining us from Whitchurch Combined School where he is currently Deputy Headteacher. There will be a number of opportunities for Mr Bowskill to visit Overstone this term so that he can get to know the children, staff and governors before he takes up the appointment. He will also spend time with Mrs France to ensure a smooth transition in the school's leadership.

Governing Body membership

Following the election held at the start of the year, we are very pleased to welcome Mrs Cathryn Siddall to the Governing Body as a parent governor.

Mr Andy Ashton has resigned from the Governing Body. Andy first joined the Governing Body as a parent governor in 2012 and became a co-opted governor in 2015. We are grateful to Andy for his contributions particularly as Sports Governor and as a member of the Finance Committee.

Details of the current membership are available on the school website:

<http://www.overstone-wing.bucks.sch.uk/website/governors>

School Development Plan

Staff have completed a huge amount of work to take forward actions in the School Development Plan for 2016-17. Governors and staff met in February to review progress on the key areas for 2016-17 and to consider additional objectives for future improvement. Discussion was wide-ranging and purposeful, creating many ideas to feed into development planning for 2017-18. The Headteacher leads the development process, working closely with school staff and governors. Staff will also work closely with staff at St Michael's and High Ash on Network Learning Community Action Plans. The final version of the School Development Plan for 2017-18 is scheduled to be considered by the Governing Body at its meeting in July and will take effect from the start of the new school year.

Monitoring quality of teaching

An important aspect of the Governing Body's work is holding the Headteacher to account for the school's educational performance. Each term the Headteacher provides the Governing Body with a report which covers all aspects of the school's activities. One key section of the report is "How effective is the quality of teaching?" At its meeting on 22 March, the Governing Body reviewed feedback from an OFSTED inspector who is also CEO of a large multi-academy trust who had recently carried out formal observations of all classes alongside Mrs France.

In Key Stage 1, there was praise for effective behaviour management strategy, all children being engaged in learning, very appropriate questioning of children, positive and respectful relationships and good use of opportunities for cross-curricular learning.

Feedback in Key Stage 2 included good use of open questioning, clear learning objectives, pupils being very keen and enthusiastic, high expectations and very calm focused environment.

An Early Years external adviser visited the school last term and highlighted key strengths in the Nursery in a written report: "The Nursery team are inspirational. Their evident enthusiasm, hard work and energy is at the heart of their drive to ensure the best outcomes for the children."

Cover for teachers

We are aware that a small number of parents have asked for clarification of the school's arrangements for covering PPA time. All teachers are entitled to 10% PPA (planning, preparation and assessment) time during the school week. At Overstone this generally equates to about 2 hours a week and all our teachers are allocated their PPA time during the afternoon sessions to ensure Maths and English lessons are always taught by the class teacher. The school is fortunate to have a number of well-qualified support staff with an HLTA qualification, who have skills in a range of different areas of the curriculum, and the Headteacher uses this to the school's advantage to cover PPA time. This enables the school to use adults who know the children well and work alongside the teaching staff to deliver the curriculum. All lessons are planned by class teachers. The Governing Body affirmed its support for this policy at its meeting on 22 March as it appears to be the most effective way of delivering high quality lessons to the children.

Behaviour of visitors on the school site

As the employer of the school's staff, the Governing Body has a legal duty to ensure their health, safety and welfare at work. All our staff have the right to carry out their work without fear of verbal or physical abuse. Governors have made it clear that they will support staff in terminating conversations and asking visitors to leave the premises if visitors are not treating them respectfully. Any verbal or physical abuse on educational premises constitutes a criminal offence and anyone abusing school staff may be prosecuted.

Clubs and activities

Governors have been delighted to note the increasing range of extra-curricular clubs and activities available to the children at lunchtimes and after school. We would like to thank the school staff who run these activities. Unlike many primary schools, it is the school's policy not to charge pupils for attending clubs after school and at lunchtime. It is only possible to maintain this through the goodwill of staff who give up many hours of their time to run these activities. We are sure that parents and carers join us in thanking all the school staff for their efforts.

What else has the Governing Body been doing recently?

Governor visits: It is important that Governors visit the school regularly to allow the Governing Body to carry out its monitoring and evaluation work effectively. Topics for Governor visits last term included:

- health and safety
- introduction of Maths No Problem
- better understanding of the Art curriculum and provision of resources

As always, Governors have presented reports on their visits to the Governing Body and any necessary follow-up action has been identified.

Whole Governing Body training: each year we conduct a governors' skills audit. The 2016 audit indicated some gaps in curriculum knowledge, particularly knowledge and understanding of the Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 curriculum. The school's Senior Leadership Team ran an excellent training session for governors which covered an overview of the new primary curriculum, Early Years, Phonics, Maths No Problem and Philosophy 4 Children (P4C).

Feedback

We hope that you have found this interesting. Do let us have any questions or comments via the school office or the school e-mail address (admin@overstone-wing.bucks.sch.uk).